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Review

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American Society of Church History, *Cambridge University Press* are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Church History*

volume. As a result, the theoretical context for the volume is vague at best, and readers are left to decipher such issues based on the subtleties of the various essays. Attention to these more theoretical issues might also have helped to better define the structure of the volume. As it stands, the intended triadic structure is muddy—with distinctions between religion as source and as thematic structure vague at best. Finally, attention to nonlyrical dimensions of popular music would have given greater depth to the volume. For example, is there something about the music and the aesthetics of performance that also speak to connections between religion and popular music? Only the discussion of raves in the volume comes close to offering answers to such questions.

With this said, readers interested in explorations of the Judeo-Christian content within the lyrics of popular music will find this text helpful, and the approach used in the volume will make it useful within undergraduate courses. However, readers wanting nuanced and critical analysis of both the content and theoretical/methodological implications of this synergy between religion and popular music will end up frustrated.

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Lucifer Ascending: The Occult in Folklore and Popular Culture. By Bill Ellis. Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2004. 288 pp. \$35.00 cloth.

Satan is hot—even literally, one supposes. Books about the occult have abounded in recent years. I thus expected *Lucifer Ascending* by Bill Ellis to be a rather prosaic affair—been there, read that. But I was pleasantly surprised. I ought not to have been, however. Ellis's reputation in religion and folklore studies is quite strong and still growing. Yet I have read many books by other authors that may have become better journal length studies or were otherwise short on ideas. This is definitely not the case here.

My first impression is that Ellis is up-front with his Christian faith. I found this interesting, especially after his experiences with his previous and related monograph, *Raising the Devil* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2000). In Ellis's words, "a number of academic reviews, while generally favorable toward the book, commented on the way in which I had professed my faith in God . . . finding it unnecessary and perhaps defensive" (ix). Ellis raises this point in his acknowledgments. This reviewer does not find Ellis's profession of belief unnecessary or defensive. Rather, I appreciate his candor. I am not a practicing Christian myself, but I find Ellis's foregrounding of his own faith refreshing because—despite decades and even centuries of thought to the contrary—there is no such thing as a "view from nowhere." Ellis informs the reader of his background and unabashedly brings his experience to bear. This is a bold and admirable move.

Ellis deploys a highly readable yet undeniably academic style. He frames his discussion with references to the megapopular *Harry Potter* novels by J. K. Rowling, constantly referring back to *Harry Potter* and its terminology. He captures author Rowling's frustration with the constant distortions of her books by evangelical Christians who suggest they are witchcraft grimoires, and Ellis's sense of humor comes through in his subtle upbraiding of those who too easily embrace urban legends such as those that surround the novels.

He continues with a thorough, chapter length discussion of the following themes: historical witchcraft, spellbooks and their history, chain letters, mag-

ical fetishes (rabbits' feet), table-tapping and Ouija board activity, and concludes with a section on the understudied Welsh revivals of the first decade of the twentieth century. With the kind of dexterity only mastery of one's subject matter can bring, Ellis weaves these themes together, explaining how magical practices originated, as well as how prevalent they remain in contemporary America across cultures. His discussion of folklore practices such as drawing magical circles and feuds involving witchcraft between different families connects easily with my own knowledge and experience of folklore, fed by a rural upbringing as well as my own studies. I had not realized how widespread such magical practices remain. Indeed, they are quite possibly growing with the rise of modernity and the invasion of urban areas into retreating rural landscapes. Ellis makes this paradoxical point, and I find it spot on.

Moreover, Ellis finds that magical practice allows room for young adults and those on the margins of culture to act out deviant "antiplays," actions that often allow youngsters, especially, to grow into an increasingly complicated world, so long as their "play" does not become criminal, which it unfortunately sometimes does. But for the games to be successful, Ellis points out, the risks must be perceived as genuine. At heart I also believe a lot of American adults want magic and mystery to remain in their world as a defense against the encroachments of modernity. We want the benefits of modernity, of course, but a little "legend-tripping," as Ellis calls it, seems of sociocultural value. For example, as a youth I enjoyed visiting famous graveyards and going on ghost tours in such notorious haunts as Edinburgh, Scotland; Salem, Massachusetts; and Charleston, South Carolina. Such legend tripping was very much a part of my youth, even if at times I knew such activities were a little hokey.

I also appreciated Ellis's evenhanded treatment of his material. He is not a debunker looking to expose Russian "spoonbenders." No, for Ellis, the possibility remains open that some of this may have a kernel of abstract "truth," even if its wilder aspects, such as the infamous "Satan Scares" of the 70s and 80s, are hash. I do wish Ellis had included more about this latter subject in *Lucifer Ascending*, although I know he deals with it elsewhere. It may have made a very good book an even better stand-alone volume on the darker side of American folklore, however. And nitpicking a bit, I noted Ellis's mention of the nineteenth-century Christian author Sidney [sic] Sheldon, who trademarked the phrase, "What Would Jesus Do." It was actually Charles M. Sheldon, rather than Sidney Sheldon—a twentieth century novelist and television writer-producer. But this takes *nothing* away from Ellis's effort: I hope that it can be corrected in future editions, as the book merits a long print-run. Finally, rather than rate the book, I compliment it by noting that I have adopted it as a textbook for my course on North American religions. It will be a valuable asset.

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Between Heaven and Earth: The Religious Worlds People Make and the Scholars Who Study Them. By Robert Orsi. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005. xii + 247 pp. \$26.95 cloth.

In the current cultural climate, to publish a book dealing with religion is to court a frustration unique to the subject: that of being asked—by interview-